LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

As the board that oversees North Carolina’s workforce development system, the NCWorks Commission relies on data to inform strategies that enable the state’s workforce and businesses to compete in the global economy. Our mission is to ensure North Carolina has a world-class workforce development system that is adaptable, integrated, relevant, efficient, and effective.

To develop the very best information to support our mission, we commissioned the Labor and Economic Analysis Division (LEAD) in the NC Department of Commerce to conduct the 2018 Employer Needs Survey. This survey is an update to the reports produced by LEAD in 2014 and 2016. The commission is committed to tracking the needs of employers over time to ensure that our workforce development system is meeting not only their needs, but is becoming a strategic asset for them.

This year’s survey provides vital data about the extent to which North Carolina businesses are experiencing hiring difficulties and identifies the top reasons, recognizing that different challenges exist for different industry segments, different business sizes and different regions. There was some good news in the report: hiring remains strong in North Carolina with 44.3% of employers expected hiring to increase in the future.

However, half of all companies surveyed reported difficulty in hiring new staff, a substantial increase over previous years. In key growth industries like Manufacturing and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) industries, the number approaches two-thirds. Among the reasons employers encountered difficulties, two-thirds cited inadequate employability skills and half also reported that candidates had inadequate experience or technical skills – or that there simply weren’t enough candidates in the applicant pool to fill their roles.

The conclusions drawn from the report will assist the workforce development ecosystem to develop or move to scale data-informed policies and programs that equip job seekers with the skills and experience required by businesses. For example, the evidence suggests younger workers would benefit greatly from earlier work experiences - such as apprenticeships, internships, and other work-based learning programs – that will help them develop the kinds of employability skills they need for the good jobs that are too often difficult to fill in our state. Opportunities also exist for the workforce system to more fully engage with employers to help meet their needs and prepare job seekers for current and future jobs. The commission will continue its efforts to identify and address mis-alignments that exist between labor supply and demand.

The findings in the report support the key elements of Governor Roy Cooper’s NC Job Ready Initiative and his priorities for workforce development, to which we are fully committed. NC Job Ready has three core principles: skills and education attainment, employer leadership, and local innovation. Our continued, collaborative progress on NCWorks Certified Career Pathways, business engagement strategies, and NCWorks Career Centers will support NC Job Ready by preparing North Carolinians for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

I want to thank Governor Cooper for placing his confidence in the commission, and LEAD for this impactful report that will ensure our workforce system is responsive to the fast-changing needs of employers.

Kevin Trapani, Chair
NCWorks Commission